

**Teacher's Guide For  
Great American Authors Since 1650  
Program 5: 1926 - 1939**

**For grade 7 - College**

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**LINKS TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS**

The design for this program was guided by the National Center for History in the Schools, United States History curriculum Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation-Standards 1 and 3 for grades 5-12, Era 9 Postwar United States -Standard 4 for grades 5-12, and the California Public School Standards for Historical Content, Grade 8 - Standards 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 (#4 - #7), Standard 8.8 (#1) and Grade 11, Standards 11.1 (#2, #3), 11.3 (#5), 11.5 - (#3, #4) and 11.10 (#2, #3) and Grade 12, Standards 12.1, 12.4 and 12.5; and the California State Board of Education English Language Arts Grade 8, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis; Grades 9 and 10, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis; and Grades 11 and 12, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis.

## **MATERIALS IN THE PROGRAM**

**Teacher's Guide** -This Teacher's Guide has been prepared to aid the teacher in utilizing materials contained within this program. In addition to this introductory material, the guide contains the following:

- *Suggested Instructional Notes*
- *Student Learning Goals*
- *Test Questions on Blackline Masters Quizzes for duplication and handout to students.*
- *Gallery of Great American Authors*

## **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES**

It is suggested that you preview the program and read the related Student Goals and Teacher Points. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the program to the needs of your class. Please note that this show is set up to be played continuously and you will probably find it best to follow the program in the order in which it is presented, but this is not necessary. The program can be divided into chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. It is also suggested that the program presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. As you review the instructional program outlined in the Teacher's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students. After viewing the program you may wish to copy the **Test Questions on Blackline Masters 5A** and distribute to your class to measure their comprehension of the events.

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRAM**

*A DVD of Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 5: 1926 - 1939* is a new approach to presenting in an exciting way the great literary tradition of the United States. The program is designed to present American authors and literature in a way that promotes successful student learning. Program 5 begins by examining the greatest age of 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature and the gifted group of writers - Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Pearl Buck and John Steinbeck, who took the novel to its greatest heights, and Eugene O'Neill, the century's greatest playwright.

The program is laid out so it can be viewed in its entirety, or by individual chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. Each chapter presents a complete story of an exceptional American literary figure, as well as themes of American literature: the unique and innovative American voice, lost generation authors, Nobel Prize winners; southern writers; women authors and playwrights. The chapters show how American authors told the story of America as its chroniclers and interpreters. Most importantly, historical themes and figures are clearly presented using state of the art visuals.

Below is a list of the program's chapters. Using this program, teachers can create a lesson plan to cover the specific issues, themes and historical figures mentioned.

## **Great American Writers**

### **Program 5: 1926 - 1939**

1. 1929 - Thomas Wolfe Writes *Look Homeward Angel*

2. 1929 - William Faulkner Showcases the South with *The Sound and the Fury*
3. 1930 - Sinclair Lewis Becomes the First American to Win the Nobel Prize for Literature
4. 1931 – Pearl Buck Writes *The Good Earth*
5. 1936 - Playwright Eugene O’Neill Wins Nobel Prize for Literature
6. 1939 – Steinbeck Writes *The Grapes of Wrath*

## **Program 5: 1926 – 1939**

Program five looks at the authors who were known collectively as the *lost generation* and how they created the golden age of American literature.

Chapter one examines how Thomas Wolfe’s writing style changed the American literary scene through a rejection of conventional literary forms and his publishers becoming more involved with his books.

Chapter two discusses how William Faulkner’s novels opened up the south to the rest of the nation.

Sinclair Lewis’s impact on American literature through his novels on small town America is discussed in chapter three.

Pearl Buck’s novels about China are discussed in chapter four.

The plays and life of Eugene O’Neill are examined in chapter five.

Chapter six looks at the ever evolving writing of John Steinbeck from the time he won fame for his portrayal of life in the Depression to his heartwarming depiction of travels through America 25 years later.

### **1929 - Thomas Wolfe Writes *Look Homeward Angel***

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Thomas Wolfe’s style greatly impacted the American novel
  - Wolfe’s elegant, lyrical prose evoked imagery and emotion like an impressionist’s painting
  - He rejected the traditional style of novels and created a new autobiographical style
  - This style would become a major part of the way 20<sup>th</sup> century American writers would write
- How Wolfe’s life formed his unique autobiographical style
- Editors Max Perkins and Edward Aswell became involved with Wolfe and helped him to create his masterpieces

### **1929 - William Faulkner Showcases the South with *The Sound and the Fury***

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- William Faulkner was one of the south’s premier writers
- Like fellow lost generation author Thomas Wolfe, Faulkner grew up an outsider in his hometown and even in his own family
- Faulkner’s masterpiece, *The Sound and the Fury*, not only showcased the south but also Faulkner’s the stream-of-consciousness style of writing
- *The Sound and the Fury*’s themes included the decline of 19<sup>th</sup> century southern society and the greedy standards of the new South arising in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Faulkner would return to these themes again and again in his next novels, *As I Lay Dying*, *Absalom, Absalom!* *The Reivers* and his acclaimed Snopes Family trilogy

- One of Faulkner's greatest legacies is that he opened the door for southern writers to speak about their experiences in the deep south
  - One of the most famous was *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's semi-autobiographical southern Gothic novel, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961

## **1930 - Sinclair Lewis Becomes the First American to Win the Nobel Prize for Literature**

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Sinclair Lewis was the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature
- Sinclair Lewis was the old man of the lost generation writers, and the first one to achieve the phenomenal acclaim that followed all of these authors
- Lewis' appeal and satiric wit are highlighted in *Elmer Gantry*
- Lewis' indictment of fundamentalist religion is a satiric *tour de force*
- His works, exposed the darker side of not only the American dream but the small town public image

## **1931 – Pearl Buck Writes *The Good Earth***

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- The lost generation period in American literature had many impressive women authors, including Gertrude Stein, Josephine Herbst, Zora Neale Hurston and Margaret Mitchell
- Pearl Buck was the most prolific and the most widely read
- Her books changed the attitudes of people throughout the world
- Pearl Buck was born in China the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries
- Her greatest work *The Good Earth* presented with great admiration and empathy the human condition of the people Buck had grown up with
- She brought the people of a once great empire into America's homes and showed that the Chinese embraced universal ideals of love, peace and perseverance
- Buck left China in 1934 and spent the rest of her life writing in Pennsylvania

## **1936 - Playwright Eugene O'Neill Wins Nobel Prize for Literature**

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Playwright Eugene O'Neill introduced to American theater the dramatic realism pioneered in Europe
- As a young man, O'Neill wandered aimlessly around the world wrestling with the tragedies of life
- O'Neill won four Pulitzers and a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936
- In 1941 he wrote his greatest play the autobiographical *Long Day's Journey into Night*

## **1939 – Steinbeck Writes *The Grapes of Wrath***

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Steinbeck's novels carried on the long American literary tradition of social activism begun by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Steinbeck's career took off in 1935 with the publication of *Tortilla Flat* about pleasure-seeking Mexican American workers
- He followed this novel with *Of Mice and Men*
- All of Steinbeck's novels can be considered social novels
  - He captured the desperation of the American worker ... The plight of the land ... And the falseness of the American dream
  - It was in *The Grapes of Wrath* that Steinbeck's social activism reached its peak
  - The novel follows the Joad family as they travel from the dust bowl of Oklahoma in the

1930's to the promised land of California, looking for a better life

- With *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck introduced a realist style into his narrative
- As an author, Steinbeck kept reinventing himself, changing his subject matter and styles
- The Nobel Prize Committee awarded Steinbeck the 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature

**Answers to Blackline Master Quiz 5A, Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 5: 1926 – 1939**

1-a; 2-b; 3-c; 4-b; 5-d; 6-b; 7-c; 8-a; 9-b; 10-a; 11-d; 12-c;